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A

DISCOURSE  
ON THE DUTY OF  
MUTUAL EXHORTATION  
IN THE *K Jesus Church*  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

BY ONE OF THE PASTORS OF THE BAPTIST  
CHURCH AT EDINBURGH.

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*And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye  
also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also  
to admonish one another. Rom. xv. 14.*

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## DEDICATION.

TO all who believe the GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST; and esteem it their privilege, and indispensable duty, to observe his Ordinances, in a state of separation from the world \*.

MY BRETHREN,

I AM sensible that it would be improper to address the world in general about the subject of the following pages. Unbelievers, and even strict professors in the national way, will not find themselves interested in it; there being no such custom as is here recommended, except in churches formed on the plan of those which were planted by the Apostles. But I hope that you, who, in consequence of believing the gospel, have been baptized, and taught to observe all things whatsoever Jesus Christ hath commanded (a), will see the importance of brethren in churches speaking the truth in love, that they may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ (b); and exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (c). I doubt not you will also readily admit, that brethren on whom the Lord hath conferred gifts for speaking to the edification of others, do not perform this duty merely by

\* There is an obvious reason for not confining the dedication to persons qualified for speaking in public. Those who hear are no less interested in this subject than those who speak, for the thing intended is the edification of all. And the same authority which binds the one to speak as the oracles of God, binds also the other to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; to receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls; and to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their own selves. James i. 19, 21, 22.

(a) Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.

(b) Ephes. iv. 15.

(c) Heb. iii. 13.

filling up a certain portion of time allotted for the purpose, unless they are animated by the motives of the gospel, and speak the truth in a humble, zealous, and affectionate manner. On these accounts I hope to be forgiven, for thus attempting, in a very familiar way, to show you what is implied in speaking as the oracles of God.

The substance of the following discourse was delivered some time ago to the Baptist church at Edinburgh, who are all persuaded that it is the duty and privilege of brethren in Christian churches to exhort one another, not only in private, but also when publicly assembled together \*. It was therefor unnecessary to establish this point, by the various arguments and scripture proofs that might have been adduced, to corroborate what is only hinted at in the introduction. Indeed, those who will not be satisfied with a plain injunction, such as that contained in Heb. x. 25. "Forake not the assembling of yourselves together,—but "exhort one another;" (where the brethren in general are evidently commanded to exhort one another, when assembled for the purpose of divine worship,) will hardly be convinced by any argument, however plain, forcible, and conclusive.

I have touched both at the matter and manner of exhortation, but have dwelt chiefly on the last of these; not from any idea that our manner of speech is of greater importance than the truths we declare, or the duties we enjoin; but merely because it appears to me that a great deal more depends on our manner of addressing one another about the things of God, than is generally imagined; and because this has been almost totally overlooked by many Independents, not a few of whom entertain a principle, directly opposite to what is here maintained.

Though you are earnestly intreated in the following pages, to exercise any gifts which the Lord hath conferred

\* It is perhaps scarce needful to observe, that on the contrary we are as fully persuaded, that women are entirely prohibited from public teaching or exhorting, as being inconsistent with that modesty and subjection which becomes the sex. I Cor. xiv. 34, 35. I Tim. ii. 11. to the end.



upon you, for the edification of your brethren, it is far from my intention to make you consider yourselves as teachers. This would be to affirm that *all are teachers*, which is peremptorily denied by the Apostle Paul (a); and that a society of Christians may lawfully *be many masters*, or teachers, opposite to an express injunction of the Apostle James (b). It would confound the distinction between teachers and taught, which is every where preserved in the word of God, and must in the nature of the thing exist. It would confer upon all who have any gifts for speaking, that authority, rule, and presidency, which is always connected with teaching, and belongs only to those who are appointed by the churches of Christ to the *office* of teachers (c). While therefore we give full scope to the modest, humble, and zealous exercise of every gift in its proper place, agreeable to that beautiful representation of the body of Christ, 1 Corinth. chap. xii. we maintain as firmly the Lord's appointment of pastors and teachers, who have the oversight of the flock; and think it highly necessary to check the pride of those, who would take this office at their own hand, without the suffrage of their brethren (d), or even aspire at the exercise of gifts which they do not really possess (e).

Neither is it our opinion, that all are qualified for exhorting one another, as private brethren in the church. We are persuaded that the Lord hath bestowed talents of this kind upon some, and withheld them from others. But it has seldom been necessary to prohibit any of this last description, as they are generally sensible of their weakness, and do not attempt, in this way, to step out of the place assigned them in the body. We need upon the whole, rather to encourage than to restrict.

It is true I have set before you the example of Christ and his Apostles. But what other example can be proposed to the meanest of his disciples? If the duty is enjoined, it can only be performed, like all other duties, by imitating such

(a) 1 Cor. xii. 29. (b) James iii. 1. (c) 1 Thess. v. 12.  
 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 5. Chap. iv. 11, 12. 2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. ii. 15. Heb. xiii. 17.  
 (d) Acts xiv. 23. Rom. x. 15. Tit. i. 5. (e) Rom. xii. 3.

examples. Even the elders of the churches have no pretensions to an immediate commission from the Lord, or to any of those extraordinary qualifications with which the Apostles were endowed. Yet, as overseers of the flock of God, they are surely to imitate the humility, faithfulness, and zeal of the Apostles, and of the Lord himself (a). In like manner, you are not called to imitate the Apostles as public teachers, if this office has not been conferred upon you by a church of Christ. But, though you are so far from arrogating to yourselves the character of Apostles, as not even to assume the authority, or usurp the place of ordinary teachers; you may safely imitate these high examples, in every duty you have to perform as members of the body of Christ (b). And there can be no harm in copying to the utmost of your power, that humility, self-denial, fervency, and affection, with which they spoke the word of God. Nay, it is only by doing so, that you can expect to profit the souls of your brethren.

Remember also, my beloved brethren, that it is not enough, merely to be convinced in your judgments, that you are bound by the law of Christ to exhort and edify one another; though you may have such a view of the order of the churches of Christ, as will lead you to do this with outward decency. If you would have any hand in building up the churches of the saints, which is the best work you can be engaged in, and the highest honour you are capable of receiving in this world; you must live by the faith of the Son of God, enjoying a sense of his love, maintaining intercourse with God by fervent prayer in secret, as well as by attending on public ordinances, and counting all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. It is only when we speak from experience, that it can be profitable either to ourselves or others. Mere knowledge may inform the judgment, but it cannot warm the heart. This last is the province of charity or love, concerning which the Apostle says, "Charity edifieth (c)."

(a) Acts xx. 17. to 36. particularly ver. 28, 31, 35. 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

(b) 1 Cor. x. 33, and xi. 1. Ephes. v. 1, 2.

(c) 1 Cor. viii. 1.

And when our hearts are full of love, it will appear, not only in our way of speaking about the gospel, and the commandments of Christ, but in the whole of our conduct. The most effectual way to edify the souls of our brethren, is to show in ourselves an example of the practical influence of the word of God; and to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us (a). To this I apprehend the Apostle chiefly refers, when he says, "Provoking one another to love and to good works (b)." When we thus enjoy the comforts of the gospel, and live unto him who died for us, it will be an easy and natural thing to speak the truth in love, to occupy our talents in the place that God hath assigned us, and in so doing, to seek not our own honour, but the glory of God and the good of his people.

But when we fall into a state of lukewarmness and indifference, not fully awake to the importance of divine things, having but faint impressions of our own guilt and wretchedness, and of the greatness of the love of God, who gave his beloved Son to the death for us, and quickened us when we were dead in sins, how can we expect to edify one another? If we do not speak out of the abundance of our hearts, it will be a burdensome service to speak at all. When this is our situation, we become negligent in the performance of this duty; some who might be employed in it, avoid it altogether, and others keep up the mere outward form, speaking of the things which concern our everlasting welfare, in a lifeless, formal, and insipid manner.

I would exhort you, my brethren, against making such a dull, unanimated appearance in the profession of the name of Christ. A spirit of this kind is apt to steal in upon us by degrees; and I am persuaded that there is no evil at this time more universally prevalent among the followers of Christ. Yet his coming draweth nigh; the Judge standeth before the door; and the cry will soon be heard, behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. While he tarrieth, not only the foolish, but even the wise virgins are

(a) Ephes. v. 1, 2.

(b) Heb. x. 24.



asleep (a). Dream not, however, of peace and safety in this unwarrantable posture. You will at any rate be afraid and ashamed, if you thus meet the Lord at his coming. And though all his people will be safe in that tremendous day, you have no reason to think that you are his people, if you sleep like those who are of the night and of darkness, and who say peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming upon them. The Apostle shows the very opposite of this to be the character of the true followers of Christ, while he thus addresses them, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch, and be sober (b)."

I have only further to request, that you would attentively consider the word of God in relation to this important subject; and that such of you as are possessed of gifts, would endeavour to regulate the exercise of them by that unerring standard. To assist you in this, especially those of you who labour under many disadvantages by residing at a distance from churches, is the intention of publishing the following discourse. Praying that the Lord may accompany it with his effectual blessing, I am, affectionately yours in the bonds of the gospel.

THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH, }  
30th July, 1787. }

(a) Mat. xxv. 5.

(b) 1 Theff. v. 4, 5, 6.



A

DISCOURSE

ON THE DUTY OF

MUTUAL EXHORTATION.

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I PET. iv. 11.

*If any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God.*

THE brethren in general are here addressed. The Apostle does not say, if any elder or teacher speak—but any man, that is, any brother. This should be understood in the same way as the words that follow. “If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.” All who have this world’s goods are called to minister to the saints, and they are to do it, according to the ability which God giveth. In like manner, all who are possessed of any gift for speaking, are to use it according to their ability. There may be some who have no gifts, and there are also some who have nothing wherewith to minister; but, while it is the duty of the rest of the brethren to teach the one, and minister to the wants of the other, I beseech you all to consider, that the smallest mite is accepted in ministring, and it would be a crime even to withhold a mite, when it is in our power to give it. Apply this to the other duty of speaking or exhorting. If nothing has been conferred upon you, nothing will be required; but if the Lord hath given you ability thus to contri-

bute, though in a small degree, to the edification and comfort of the church, and you neglect to do so, remember you will be called to an account for hiding your talent.

The great end here proposed by speaking as the oracles of God, as well as by ministring to the faints, is, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Is it possible to urge upon your minds a more powerful motive to enforce this duty? If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you must surely be desirous that his name may be glorified, yet none are truly desirous of this, who do not bear their part in the duties enjoined upon Christians, and are remiss in occupying those talents which the Lord hath conferred upon them.

Another motive which will readily occur to you, is the edification of the brethren. How much ought this to be at heart with us? and should we not be fully persuaded that this, and every other appointment in the kingdom of Christ, will answer the gracious purposes for which they were intended, when we act agreeable to his will, and have all our dependence on him? But if such great ends are to be accomplished by the brethren speaking as the oracles of God, it may well be expected that they will be anxious to know the meaning of this exhortation, and how they ought to speak, so as God in all things may be glorified, and the church comforted, and built up on their most holy faith. Allow me therefore to say a few things on this subject. By the oracles of God is meant his word, by which he speaks and reveals his will to men (*a*). When you are commanded to speak as the oracles of God, the meaning is, that the matter of what you say should be exactly conformable to his word, and the manner of it agreeable to what is enjoined, and exemplified in the scripture, as well as suitable to the nature of the truth

(*a*) Acts vii. 38. Rom. iii. 2. Heb. v. 12.

which you declare. Let us make a few remarks on each of these.

I. As to the *matter* of exhortation. Notice in the first place, that the grand leading subject must be the truth concerning Christ. Speak of the dignity of his person as the great God and our Saviour, the perfection of his atonement, the assurance given of salvation to those that believe on his name, the suitability of that salvation to our circumstances, who are poor, wretched, miserable sinners. It is thus we are exhorted to speak *the truth* in love, that we may grow up into him in all things who is the head even Christ (*a*). And exhorting one another daily, is represented as a mean of saving us from an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; as well as preventing us from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (*b*). Present to our view the glorious object of hope which is held forth in the gospel, that we may be encouraged to keep the faith (*c*)—press it upon our minds; from the consideration of the faithfulness, power, and mercy of God, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ (*d*)—show us how this hope is warranted by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who rose as the first fruits of them that sleep (*e*), and now says, surely I come quickly, Amen (*f*). This truth, or salvation through Christ, is that which we see is chiefly dwelt on in the word of God. It may be termed the sum and substance of Divine revelation. Moses and all the prophets wrote of Christ (*g*). They testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (*h*). Christ crucified was the whole amount of the Apostles' preaching (*i*). In this they gloried as a foundation of hope to themselves; and

(*a*) Eph. iv. 15. (*b*) Heb. iii. 12, 13. (*c*) 1 Theff. iv. 18.  
 Chap. v. 11. (*d*) 1 Theff. v. 23, 24. 2 Theff. iii. 3. Heb. x. 23.  
 Jude verse 24. Rom. viii. 31, 32. (*e*) 1 Cor. xv. 12.—29.  
 (*f*) Rev. xxii. 20. (*g*) Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 46. Acts x. 43.  
 (*h*) 1 Pet. i. 11. (*i*) 1 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 2, 5, 6, 7.



all their labours were directed to show to the world the evidence of this truth, and to establish the churches in the faith of it. Every thing else in Christianity is connected with this, and is important and valuable just in proportion as it stands nearly related to the truth. Therefor, if you would speak as the oracles of God, let the cross of Christ be the main subject of your exhortations, and let every thing you say be accompanied with the favour of his blessed name.

2d, The commandments of our Lord and Saviour likewise furnish ample matter for exhortation. Put the brethren in remembrance of these. Count none of his commandments trifling or unimportant, while you remember that they are all enforced by the authority of him, who died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Keep always in your view the inseparable connection between the faith and hope of the gospel, and subjection to the laws of Christ. Warn us of the danger of making an empty profession of the name of Christ, or saying unto him Lord, Lord, while we do not the will of his Father who is in heaven (*a*). Enforce upon our consciences every commandment of the Lord by the motives of the gospel, the love of God (*b*), the hope of eternal life (*c*), the fear of being disapproved at that day, when Christ shall reward his faithful followers (*d*). Insist chiefly on those commandments which are most contrary to our natural inclinations, which we have the strongest temptations to oppose, or to which, from whatever cause, you may see us least attentive.

3d, Urge upon us most frequently the things of greatest importance. Christ speaks of the great and weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith (*e*). There are a great variety of subjects in the

(*a*) Mat. vii. 21, 22, 23. (*b*) Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.  
 1 John iii. 16. Chap. iv. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. (*c*) Tit. ii. 11. to 15.  
 1 John iii. 2, 3. (*d*) 1 Cor. ix. 27. Chap. vi. 9, 10. Gal. vi.  
 3, 4, 5, 7, 8. Mat. xxv. 26. to the end. (*e*) Mat. xxiii. 23.



word of God, and they are not all of equal importance in themselves, though it is of the greatest consequence to us, to regard every thing in its proper place. Notice what is most insisted on in the word of God, and let your exhortations bear some proportion to this. We do not speak as the oracles of God, if we often dwell on those things which are but seldom mentioned in the scriptures, and sparingly touch at other things, which are to be met with almost in every page. Beware also of too great a fondness for any particular point, as this might endanger your neglect of something else, equally important, or perhaps more so. Observe the connection and harmony of the truths of God, and see that you make every thing to correspond according to that beautiful order which is established in his word.

4th, Exhort chiefly on practical subjects: the experience of a Christian, the comfort and joy of the truth, a conversation becoming the gospel, with the motives which powerfully constrain the followers of Christ to be subject to his laws. Let it be something that has a tendency to warm the heart, to raise our affections above this present world, to comfort us under affliction, to enliven our souls, and make us more zealous and active in the service of God. To do this, is to speak as the oracles of God, for every doctrine revealed in the scripture is meant to affect the heart, and regulate the practice. Much is there said about the unprofitableness of mere knowledge, or vain speculation (a). I do not pretend to say that the brethren are absolutely prohibited from instructing one another, or opening up the meaning of a scripture-text, if they do it properly, and make a suitable improvement. The brethren in general are exhorted to teach and admonish one another, but in order to this it is necessary that they should be full of good-

(a) Mat. vii. 21. to the end. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. Chap. viii. 1, 2, 3. James. ii. 14. to the end. 1 John ii. 4. Chap. iii. 17.

ness, filled with all knowledge, and that the word of Christ should dwell in them richly in all wisdom (a). When this is the case, they will not be much taken up with mere speculation. Let what you say in general therefor, be exhortation properly so called. This will do us more good than teaching, for most of us are not so deficient in point of knowledge, as we are in the experience and practice of Christians.

To enforce this still further, let it be observed, that many of the brethren who are incapable to teach, may be very useful in the way of exhorting the church, and if they step out of their proper place they cannot expect to edify their brethren. A caution is given against this, Rom. xii. 3. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." A beautiful description is likewise given of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. chap. xii. from which we see it consists of a variety of members, occupying different stations for the good of the whole. It is therefor necessary that every one should know the place assigned him in the body, that he may minister therein with profit to his brethren\*.

(a) Rom. xv. 14. Col. iii. 16.

\* It is manifest from the description here referred to, that some are teachers in distinction from the brethren in general, who are to be taught and instructed by them. There must therefor be an essential difference between that teaching which is allowed to the brethren, and that which is the peculiar province of those who are teachers by office; which in my apprehension consists in the following particulars. 1. It would appear, that expounding the scriptures, and illustrating subjects in a doctrinal way, belongs to the pastors of a church in distinction from the brethren. It does not seem to be the province of the latter, to speak on any occasion, solely with a view to establish doctrinal points, or to open up the meaning of the word of God. The teaching that is enjoined on the brethren in general, seems only to be what is necessary to lay a foundation for practical exhortations, in which they should chiefly be employed. This I gather from their

II. Let us now proceed to give a few hints as to the *manner* of exhortation.

1st, Let all that you say be directed to some end. Never speak in a vague, loose, and unmeaning way: the intention of your doing so, is not merely to fill up the time, you ought always to have the church's edi-

being frequently called to exhort, admonish, comfort, edify, &c. and only once in the New Testament commanded to teach, where also it is connected with admonishing one another (*a*), and cannot be supposed to confer upon them the office of teaching. 2. To exhort and convince gainfayers is also the peculiar province of teachers. This is expressly mentioned as a part of the elder's character and office, that he should "hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and "to convince the gainfayers (*b*). And this is no where said to be the duty of the brethren in a public way, though some may be able to do it in private, and all are supposed capable to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them (*c*). 3. The authority and presidency that is connected with teaching, belongs only to those who have the oversight of the flock of God (*d*). See the Dedication, p. 5, & 6. And the distinction of which we now treat, is visible, and ought to be so, in every well regulated assembly of Christians; a pulpit, or some convenient elevated seat being reserved for the teachers only, who thus appear as the leaders and presidents of the church. Though this is not taken notice of in the New Testament, yet, when we consider that the churches were commanded to do all things decently and in order (*e*), and that their order was such as could be beheld (*f*), we have no reason to doubt that this was part of their practice.

Two cases only occur to me wherein it may be necessary for brethren to go beyond the bounds that are here prescribed. In places where there are no elders, the nature of the thing requires that one of the brethren should preside, but this may be done without setting himself up as a teacher. And when a church have an eye to a particular person, as being fit for the elder's office, or for preaching the gospel to the world, it is very proper that they should make trial of his gifts in the most public way: but in this case he proceeds with the suffrage of his brethren, who have certainly as good a right to try the gifts of those who are to bear office among them, as they have to confer any office, when fully satisfied with the person's qualifications (*g*).

(*a*) Col. iii. 16.

(*b*) Tit. i. 9. see also, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

(*c*) 1 Pet. iii. 15.

(*d*) 1 Pet. v. 2, 5.

(*e*) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

(*f*) Col. ii. 5.

(*g*) 1 Tim. v. 22. Chap. iii. 1.—14. particularly ver. 6, 10. Tit. i. 5.—11.



fication in view; and in order to this, it is necessary that you be pointed and express as to some particular thing, in which you would have us corrected, or established. It is not enough that good things are said: we will not be much edified, unless we discern the purpose you have in view, and have our minds drawn to the consideration of some particular subject,—mention what it is, and keep to the point, for thus only we can give that degree of attention which is necessary, in order to our profiting by what you say.

This is included in speaking as the oracles of God; for though the scripture is not wrote in the form of a system, yet we meet with no confusion there:—a subject is often dwelt upon and pursued in the closest manner. In reading the word of God, our minds are not distracted with a variety of things confusedly blended together. How closely do the Apostles keep to the point in preaching the gospel, declaring uniformly the death and resurrection of Christ as the foundation of hope to guilty men, and assuring all that believe, of salvation through his name? Is there not also a beautiful order to be observed in the epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle first treats of the corruption of human nature, then of justification thro' Christ, and next of the blessed effects produced by that justification, keeping always to the subject in hand? See too how closely he keeps to his text, when he illustrates and improves the Old Testament scriptures, particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, and 10. The same order is not indeed to be seen in every other part of the scripture; but the language is always expressive, and suited to call our attention to the great things therein revealed.

Perhaps, if what has just been said were duly attended to, it might greatly shorten some of our exhortations, but this in my opinion would be no disadvantage. A few words fitly spoken, may be of more use than many long discourses;—besides, long exhortations both tend to discourage young begin-



ners, and prevent those who might incline it, from having an opportunity for want of time.

2d, Speak the word of God with solemnity and reverence. It is the character of the Lord's people that they tremble at his word (a). This ought not only to be the disposition of your minds, but should also be visible in your appearance, and manner of speaking. A hasty and irreverend method of speech, like a school-boy repeating his lesson; or even a careless posture of the body, is very unbecoming, when you are employed in calling our attention to the word of God.

The wise man gives us this necessary caution. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefor let thy words be few (b)." You will easily perceive, that such a deep impression of the majesty and holiness of God, and such earnest care about the propriety of what we say before him, as is here enjoined, will be accompanied with a serious and deliberate manner of address, suited to the importance of what we are engaged in, and expressive of our highest veneration for the name of God. The directions here given are commonly understood to apply only to our approaches unto God in prayer. But Solomon had more in view than this. The prohibition of rash vows, under that dispensation, was one thing principally intended, as appears from verse 4. and what he says was suited to regulate the whole of their deportment in the house of God. Doubtless we ought in a particular manner to attend to his instructions, when employed in the duty of prayer, which, as it is an immediate approach unto God,

(a) Ezra ix. 4. Isa. xlv. 2. Ps. cxix. 120. (b) Eccles. v. 1, 2.

must be owned to be a more solemn and important duty than speaking to one another. But he also directs us in general how to behave in the house of God, and in all that we utter before him: and you will be the more enabled to comply with what he requires, if both in public prayers (*a*), and in speaking as the oracles of God, you attend to that part of the exhortation, "therefor let thy words be few."

3d, Speak the word of God with humility. The gospel, if it has any proper influence upon our minds, must humble us, not only in the sight of God, but also in regard to one another. Thus all of us are exhorted to be subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility, from this consideration, God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (*b*). If then we are clothed with humility, it must surely appear in our way of exhorting the brethren, as well as in every thing else. Do not speak in that over-bearing and dictatorial stile, which always disgusts, and therefor cannot be supposed to edify. Avoid unbecoming forwardness, and assume such an air and manner as bespeaks your submission to the brethren. The language of intreaty is most effectual, as well as most becoming among Christians, and to this we are exhorted, 1 Tim. v. 1, 2. "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity."

Our pride may also appear in cavilling about words, making a great noise about things which have no relation either to the faith or practice of Christians, and being too fond of our own opinions. Of such persons the Apostle says, "that they are proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of

(*a*) Mat. vi. 7, 8.  
Philip. ii. 3.

(*b*) 1 Pet. v. 7. See also Rom. xii. 10.

“ corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, &c. (a). And he gives frequent cautions against every thing of this sort in his epistles to Timothy and Titus (b). I do not blame any of the brethren at present for a spirit of this kind; but let us just think how unbecoming it would be in a man to stand up and speak to his brethren that truth by which the pride of man is abased, with an air of self-sufficiency, conceited of his own opinion, and more careful to recommend himself than the truth. We all know how we would feel upon such an occasion: indignation against the man would be more prevalent in our minds, than joy in the truth which he might declare. But, brethren, we are all too much disposed naturally to be proud of our own wisdom and knowledge, and we are more apt to discern appearances of this kind in others than in ourselves. Let us therefor have a guard upon our spirits. When you exhort us, speak not as if you thought that you know any thing, for such know nothing as they ought to know (c). Think much of the truth, but little of yourselves, or your manner of declaring it.

4th, Exhort with sincerity and simplicity. Much is said about this in the word of God: it is a very essential part of the character of a Christian, and without it no man deserves the name. In nothing are Christians more distinguished from the world, than in that simplicity and sincerity of speech and conduct, which the scriptures recommend. How many professions of friendship are made in the world, which have nothing in them? they are mere words of course, or perhaps meant to ensnare and betray. But let it not be so among you: in all your conduct follow his example in whose lips no guile was found. Attention to this is particularly necessary in speaking the truth. It was the rejoicing of the Apostles, “ that,

(a) 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. (b) 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 23. Tit. i. 10.—15. Chap. iii. 9. (c) 1 Cor. viii. 2.



"in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they had their conversation in the world, and more abundantly towards the brethren(*a*)."  
 And Titus is exhorted in doctrine to show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity(*b*). When you exhort us, speak the real sentiments of your hearts, and in a way that is altogether unaffected and sincere. Make no professions of love, but what are genuine, for we are commanded to love without dissimulation(*c*), to love one another *with pure hearts fervently*(*d*): express no concern for us but what is real, no desire to edify and comfort us but what you feel.

Do not put any forced meaning upon the word of God, or wrest the scripture to answer any purpose of your own; but set it forth in it's plain, simple and natural meaning. Candidly give place to it upon all occasions, even when it seems to contradict your preconceived opinions, and thus show an example of the power of that word on your own minds, which you wish to enforce upon us. In speaking of the great things of God, use not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, for though by this you may intend to adorn the truth, you will really spoil it. The gospel is a plain and simple declaration of the mercy of God to sinners: it is expressed in such language as is familiar to the most unlearned: it scorns the aid of man's wisdom, and can only be profitably spoken in language similar to it's own(*e*).

Further, in regard to insincerity, beware that it does not take place as to the motives by which you are actuated in speaking. We all profess to do so with a view to glorify God, and to edify one another; but our hearts are deceitful, and our motives are often base, while our words, and even our actions may be good. See that your aim be not that of pleasing men,

(*a*) 2 Cor. i. 12.      (*b*) Tit. ii. 7.      See too the example of Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 2.      1 Thess. ii. 3.      (*c*) Rom. xii. 9.  
 (*d*) 1 Pet. i. 22.      (*e*) 1 Cor. i. 17.      Chap. ii. 1, 4, 13.



for this would be seeking your own glory, and not the glory of God. The Apostle says, "we speak, not as *"pleasing men, but God who trieth our hearts(a)."* This was a noble saying, and it would be well for us if we could always adopt it with sincerity. In connection with this, attend to what immediately follows, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, *"as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is *"witness."* As to the last thing you will not be much in danger, but beware of flattering us, for this can only tend to feed our pride, and to show your want of sincerity.*

If, according to the example just referred to, you sincerely wished to speak, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth our hearts, this would in a great measure banish that slavish fear, which now prevents some of you from attempting to please God in this way. I do not say that it is wrong to endeavour to please your brethren, if you do it for their good to edification, but why should a fear of displeasing them prevent you from doing your duty both to God and them? Examine into the bottom of this motive. Whatever excuses may be made on account of people's natural timidity, you will find something wrong in it. If your minds were properly exercised, you would surely be more afraid of displeasing God than your fellow-men. Does this appear to be the case, when you can live in the neglect of a duty which he hath commanded, because you are afraid that the brethren will not approve of your attempts to perform it? If you say that you are not qualified for performing this duty, then the fear of offending God should prevent you, and not the fear of men. Now which of these preponderates? Is it a fear of sinning against God that prevents you from exhorting, or a fear of not acquitting yourselves before men? The first of these is an excellent motive, but I am afraid

(a) 1 Thess. ii. 4.

that in the case now before us it has little influence with some: indeed, it would be wrong to suppose, that the true fear of God could operate in the way of preventing his people from doing his will.

Lastly, Exhort with affection, fervour and zeal. In order to this it is necessary that your own minds should be deeply affected with the important things revealed in the word of God, and that you should speak what you feel and experience. Do not satisfy yourselves merely with a persuasion that you know and believe the truth: those who do so, must not only feel it's power to enlighten their minds, but to fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, with love and gratitude to God, with zeal and activity in his service: in short, their whole heart and soul must be engaged in the religion of Christ, and suitably moved by whatever he hath said to his disciples. Let this *appear* by your lively, affectionate, and zealous manner of exhorting us. Are we not all, brethren, deeply interested in the things you say? The life of our souls is in them: but however important these things are in themselves, you may make them little felt by your manner of speaking them. If you scarcely speak so as to be heard, or set forth the doctrines and commandments of Jesus in a drawling and insipid manner, how are you to expect that we can be much affected by your exhortations? The deepest tragedy may appear, just by the manner of telling it, an uninteresting trifle, and we can scarcely listen to the cool relator. The best news, or the most entertaining and eventful story, in the mouth of him who speaks with indifference, will only tend to set his hearers a yawning. Such things happen in common life, but what a pity is it that they should take place among Christians, who have things to speak of, infinitely more important than all that can otherwise affect the hearts and passions of men! Be assured, however, that the cases are parallel. The truth of God indeed is always the same, however it may be

spoken; and it will edify and comfort the souls of the disciples; but dry, formal, and careless speeches about it, will not do so.

To hear one speak with cool indifference about the dangers we are exposed to, or the enjoyments we have in Christ, has surely no tendency to alarm us, or fill us with joy. Suppose you tell a man that the next house is on fire, and that he must instantly remove or be burnt to death; if you should say this just in the same way as you would speak of any common occurrence, without the least appearance of concern, would he believe you? Would he not wait for another messenger, or go himself, with no great agitation, to see if what you said was true? Again, were you to be a messenger of the most joyful news to a friend, and tell him *in the same careless manner*, of something greatly to the advantage of him and his family, would he not either think that you were not interested in his welfare, or that you did not yourself believe what you told him?

These things may well be applied to the subject in hand, especially in regard to unbelievers hearing what we say about the gospel: they will no doubt think that we do not believe those things ourselves, which, though we speak about them, do not seem to affect us\*: and who can blame them for thinking so?

\* Let it be carefully observed, that we do not mean to affirm, that speaking about the gospel, in the most lively and affecting manner, is of itself a sufficient evidence that we are the true disciples of Christ; nor do we say that other things are not still more essential and important. The highest attainments of this kind may be possessed by those who are destitute of love: for, says the Apostle, "Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal(*a*)."  
That is, I may please and edify others, but cannot profit myself; like a musical instrument, which gratifies those who listen to it, without being conscious of it's own charms. We are not however to imagine, that the Apostle throws any stigma upon this, or the other attainments, and outward expressions of love, which he mentions in

(*a*) 1 Cor. xiii. 1.



Our own minds would be uneasy on the very same ground, were it not that we have learned to judge opposite to this sort of evidence; making large allowance for bad habits, and the influence of a false principle, which has some way crept in to all sorts of congregational churches in this country. They were right in condemning the empty show, and false appearances of zeal and fervour, which have been displayed by many of the national clergymen, but as it has happened with many other things, they have carried this also to an extreme, and very improperly reckon it a crime to speak the truth *in love*, or to show, in the performance of this duty, any striking outward marks of that fervent love to Christ and his people, which must fill the heart of every believer.

As to the particular things whereby our earnestness and affection should be made visible, let it be observed, that every thing about a man tends to show us what is in his mind, if he is upright and sincere. The manner of speech is the principal thing; but the appearance of the speaker ought also to coincide with this, for a man addresses us not only by his words, but by his eyes, attitude, air, and motion. Speak therefor *to your audience*, look them in the face, and do not fix your eyes on the walls of the meeting-house, or the book in your hand: let your appearance indicate the concern or joy you feel: speak to us in a frank, open, and unreserved way, like a man addressing his friends on any thing materially connected with their welfare: let your address be often personal, though modest, humble and unaffected. I have sometimes thought, when a brother was exhorting, that the church were precisely in the same situation as if they were in another room,

the context; such as, having all knowledge and faith, and giving all one's goods to feed the poor; for it is evident, that the want of love itself is that alone which he condemns. There may be striking appearances of love without the reality, but there can be no reality without the appearance.

over-hearing something said, but not to them. It is not enough that you should now and then say, brethren, if the general strain of what you say does not correspond with such an address.

Some of you will perhaps think that these things are of little importance, and that the scripture says nothing about them. It appears however to me that the very nature of the truth itself directs to all that hath been said: and did not our Lord tell his disciples, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (*a*)? this surely applies to our manner of speech, as well as to the things we say: that which mainly occupies a man's heart and affections, will not only be often spoken of, but spoken in such a manner as to show that his heart and soul is in it.

I shall now mention a few scripture examples which appear to me exactly in point. The first is the most illustrious; it is the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to which I doubt not you will pay the utmost deference. Of him it is frequently noticed that he *looked round about* on those to whom he spoke, sometimes with love and pity, sometimes with anger and indignation, according as the nature of the subject, or the behaviour of men was suited to move his holy soul (*b*). It is likewise more than once said of him that he *cried*, when he preached the gospel to men: (*c*) "Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Was not this a striking outward expression of the fervency of his spirit in preaching the gospel, and his earnest desire for the salvation of sinners? When he was in the synagogue at Nazareth, he read a prophecy concerning himself (*d*), and it is noticed, (*e*) that the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, when

(*a*) Mat. xii. 34, 35.      (*b*) Mark iii. 5.      Chap. x. 23, 27.  
 Luke vi. 10.      (*c*) John vii. 37. and xii. 44.      (*d*) Luke iv.  
 16, &c.      (*e*) ver. 20.

he had only read the scripture, and sat down. Now, what could this be owing to? surely they must have been taken with his inviting aspect, and the solemnity and affection with which he read the word of God; for they did not understand the scripture which he had read. The same thing probably contributed in part afterwards, to make them wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth: he no doubt spoke them in a gracious manner. I should likewise imagine, that the officers sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to take him, must have been struck with his appearance and manner of speech, when they gave this as the reason of their not apprehending him, Never man spake like this man (a).

Do you think there would be no marks of indignation in his countenance and manner of address, when he said to his disciples, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you (b)?" or when he said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou favourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men (c)." Was there no expression in his eye, when a look of him made Peter go out and weep bitterly (d)? Did not grief appear in his countenance when he wept over the city of Jerusalem, and expressed these mournful words recorded in Luke xix. 42, 43, 44. (e) "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of

(a) John vii. 46. (b) Mat. xvii. 17. (c) Mat. xvi. 23.  
 (d) Luke xxii. 61, 62. (e) See also, Luke xiii. 33, 34, 35.



"thy visitation?" And were there no signs of joy to be seen about him, when he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight (a)?"

One might multiply instances of this kind both from the history of Christ and his Apostles, but I shall only further take notice of a few things recorded of Paul. When he preached the gospel in the synagogue at Antioch, it is said of him, "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience (b)." This was surely an open, pointed and inviting manner of address: throughout the whole of the discourse, his language is personal, striking, and affectionate in the highest degree. "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.—We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise that was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children.—Be it known unto you therefor, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—And the same personal address is made use of in the awful warning given them at the end, "Beware therefor, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." If you look through the sermons preached by the Apostles in general, you will find them much alike in this respect, and also the epistles wrote to the churches. Nay I could venture to affirm, that in all the word of God, there

(a) Luke x. 21,

(b) Acts xiii. 16.

cannot be found so much as one instance, of a person addressing men about the things of God, in a way that does not resemble this, in the particulars we have mentioned.

The same method of address was practised by Paul in the defences he made before his enemies. One of them begins thus, "Men, brethren, and fathers, "hear ye my defence(*a*). At another time he is represented in this way, "Paul *earnestly beholding* "the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived "in all good conscience before God until this "day(*b*). His speech to king Agrippa is still more remarkable in this view(*c*). On that occasion it is said of him, "Then Paul stretched forth the "hand, and answered for himself: I think myself "happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for "myself this day before thee, &c." When he begins to relate what befel him in his way to Damascus, he again addresses himself to Agrippa, "At "mid-day, O king, I saw a light from heaven, above "the brightness of the sun." Further, when beginning his description of the effects produced upon him by seeing the Just One, and hearing the voice of his mouth, he says, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." After Festus had interrupted and reviled him, and he had replied to him in a respectful, yet bold and determined manner, "I am not mad, most noble "Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and "soberness;" appealing also to the king for the truth of the facts which he had testified, and declaring that he spoke freely before him, he again turns to Agrippa, and says, "King Agrippa, believest "thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Whither the partial conviction expressed by Agrippa in these words, "Almost thou persuadest me to be "a Christian," was the effect of the truth declared

(*a*) Acts xxii. 1.

(*b*) Acts xxiii. 1.

(*c*) Acts xxvi. chap.

by Paul, or of the energy with which he spoke, or both, it is not material to determine; but nothing could be more emphatical, or more expressive of disinterested benevolence, than the answer made by Paul, "I would to God, that not only thou, but  
 "also all that hear me this day, were both almost,  
 "and altogether such as I am,—except these bonds."

I cannot attempt to enumerate the various expressions of this Apostle's love to his brethren in Christ; to some of whom he says, "God is my record how  
 "greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus  
 "Christ (a)." To others, "Now we live if ye  
 "stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we  
 "render to God again for you, for all the joy  
 "wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;  
 "night and day praying exceedingly that we might  
 "see your face, and might perfect that which is  
 "lacking in your faith (b)." And even to those who were ungrateful among them, he says, "I will  
 "very gladly spend and be spent for you, though  
 "the more abundantly I love you, the less I be  
 "loved (c)." It would be unnecessary to give you many instances of his manner of addressing himself to the churches. With these you must be well acquainted; and you cannot look into any of his epistles, without seeing abundant evidence in every page, that he dealt much in that familiar, intimate, and personal style, which is the natural effusion of love. The following may therefor suffice as a specimen of the language of entreaty often used by him, when exhorting his brethren to the duties incumbent on them as Christians. "I beseech you, therefor,  
 "brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present  
 "your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable  
 "unto God, which is your reasonable service (d).  
 "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our

(a) Philip. i. 8.

(c) 2 Cor. xii. 15.

(b) 1 Theff. iii. 8, 9, 10.

(d) Rom. xii. 1.



“ Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing,  
 “ and that there be no divisions among you; but  
 “ that ye be perfectly joined together in the same  
 “ mind, and in the same judgment (a). If there be  
 “ therefor any consolation in Christ, if any comfort  
 “ of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any  
 “ bowels and mercies: fulfil ye my joy, that ye be  
 “ like-minded, having the same love, being of one  
 “ accord, of one mind (b). I therefor, the prisoner  
 “ of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of  
 “ the vocation wherewith ye are called: with all  
 “ lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, for-  
 “ bearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep  
 “ the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (c).  
 “ Therefor my brethren, dearly beloved and longed  
 “ for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord,  
 “ my dearly beloved (d). We have great joy and  
 “ consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the  
 “ saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Wherefor  
 “ though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin  
 “ thee that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake  
 “ I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul  
 “ the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.  
 “ I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have  
 “ begotten in my bonds.—Thou therefor receive  
 “ him that is mine own bowels.—Yea, brother, let  
 “ me have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh my  
 “ bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy  
 “ obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou  
 “ wilt also do more than I say (e).” You may also  
 take the following as a specimen of his way of ad-  
 dressing their consciences, when he meant to impress  
 upon their minds a due sense of their danger, and  
 to move them with fear. “ Thou standest by faith.  
 “ Be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared  
 “ not the natural branches, take heed lest he also

(a) 1 Cor. i. 10.

(b) Philip. ii. 1.

(c) Ephes. iv. 1, 2, 3.

(d) Philip. iv. 1.

(e) Philemon, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 20, 21.

“ spare not thee (a). If any man defile the temple  
 “ of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of  
 “ God is holy, which temple ye are (b). Know ye  
 “ not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the king-  
 “ dom of God? Be not deceived (c). If ye live  
 “ after the flesh, ye shall die (d). Be not deceived,  
 “ God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth,  
 “ that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his  
 “ flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he  
 “ that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap  
 “ life everlasting (e). Let no man deceive you  
 “ with vain words: for because of these things  
 “ cometh the wrath of God upon the children of  
 “ disobedience. Be not ye therefor partakers with  
 “ them (f).”

When we consider the lively zeal by which this  
 Apostle was actuated, and his earnest desire for the sal-  
 vation of sinners, and the edification of the churches,  
 so often expressed in his writings, it would be quite  
 unnatural to suppose that his outward appearance  
 and manner did not bear evident marks of the fer-  
 vency of his spirit. Read the second chapter of his  
 first epistle to the Thessalonians throughout,—make  
 a pause at verse 8th, where he says, “ So being af-  
 “ fectionately desirous of you, we were willing to  
 “ have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God  
 “ only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear  
 “ unto us.” Is it possible, think you, that the man  
 who could utter these words with sincerity, could at  
 the same time appear dry, unanimated, or careless,  
 in preaching the gospel? Would not his very looks,  
 as well as his words, convince the Thessalonians that  
 he could impart unto them his soul?

Upon the whole, brethren, I reckon this subject  
 of very great importance. Your attention to the  
 things that have been spoken will contribute greatly

(a) Rom. xi. 20, 21.    (b) 1 Cor. iii. 17.    (c) 1 Cor. vi. 9.  
 (d) Rom. viii. 13.    (e) Gal. vi. 7, 8.    (f) Ephes. v. 6, 7.

to our edification: your neglect of them will mar it. I believe none will have any objection to what has been said, as to the matter of exhortation: but as to the manner of it, some may perhaps be diffculted, this being rather a new doctrine among us. I am only sorry that it should be so, and hope that it will be the more attended to in future, on account of it's having been so long neglected. I shall now endeavour to answer some of the most material objections.

*Object. 1.* "The rules are too nice, it will be difficult to follow them, and the brethren will be prevented from speaking at all, lest they should not do it in a proper manner."

As to the nicety of the rules, I have only to say that they are all agreeable to the nature of the truth, and many scripture examples, which hath been already shown. They are quite natural, and for this reason cannot be nice or difficult: all that is pled for, is just the natural expression of what a man feels; why then should any be discouraged, except those who do not really feel the power of the truth? of which number I hope there are none among us. Were I to tell you, that when you go to visit the sick, it would be improper just to sit down, look around you in a careless manner, and speak only about the trifles of the day: that your words and looks should be kind and affectionate, your conversation such as has a tendency to comfort; and all your deportment expressive of your love, sympathy, and care: would you say that I meant to hinder you from visiting the sick, or that an exhortation of this kind had any such tendency? The conclusion would be equally unfair in the one case as in the other.

*Object. 2.* "Every one is not capable to speak in a lively and pathetic manner, however much they may be under the practical influence of the truth. Some are prevented by their very constitution and frame of mind, from being deeply affected with any thing; and others cannot, on account of their natural timi-



dity and backwardness, express what they really feel."

It is certainly true that there is a great variety in the constitution and frame of the human mind, and on many accounts it cannot be expected, that every one should be able to speak the truth with the same degree of zeal and fervent love. But this is not supposed, in any thing that has been said upon the subject. Yet surely you must be convinced, that it is the duty, and would be the privilege, of every one who exhorts his brethren, to be under the full influence and power of what he says; and when this is the case, that it is natural for him to show by outward signs the fervency of his spirit. We may often come short of this, but it does not on this account cease to be our duty. Whatever may be said about natural defects and infirmities, which no doubt prevent some from appearing so lively and affectionate as others, there is no man incapable of being visibly affected with the important concerns of this life: and there are none so timid and backward, as to be always prevented from expressing their grief or joy to those in whom they confide. Now we are surely to expect that the gospel will have a more powerful influence in these respects, than the most important worldly concerns. If it is otherwise, we give no proper evidence that we really believe it.

*Object. 3.* "This method of address is too assuming, and does not suit with that lowliness of mind, and subjection one to another, which is highly becoming among Christians, and often recommended in the word of God. It may perhaps be allowable for teachers to speak to us in a personal and earnest manner; but if the brethren in general were to do so, they might justly be considered as stepping out of their line, and assuming an authority to which they are not entitled."

It is admitted that there may be a danger of some-

thing of this kind, particularly in those who are naturally of a keen and forward disposition; or when the outward appearance and manner is studied, without being solicitous to cultivate such a state of mind, as would natively produce all that we are pleading for. In this case, it will be very awkward to attempt it, and those who do so will appear affected, and perhaps dictatorial, and overbearing. But how it should be imagined, that this is necessarily connected with the genuine expressions of fervent love, in the most familiar and personal manner of address, I cannot comprehend. It must be evident at first sight, that love to the souls of our brethren, and the signs of this which may appear in our way of speaking to them about the gospel, are not only consistent with lowliness of mind, but cannot subsist without it; as you will see from these characters of love given us by the Apostle. "Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own." (a)

It is not unlikely that a mistake about what I have endeavoured to urge upon you, may give rise to this objection. Perhaps you may think, that fine language, and a formal studied manner of speech, or what one would call a preaching stile, is the thing intended. This is by no means the case. I would have every man to speak in a way that is perfectly natural to himself, and as he would do in a pathetic conversation, when the important truths of the gospel warm his heart, and lead him, almost without design, to express himself in a striking, lively, and affectionate manner. When this is done with simplicity and godly sincerity; your self-diffidence and humility, will be as conspicuous as your love and zeal.

*Object. 4.* "This is making too much to depend on our manner of speaking, and derogating from the

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

power of the truth itself, which does not stand in need of human aid, and can only be made effectual by the Spirit of God."

This is perhaps one of the most specious objections that could be urged; yet it will not be difficult to show that it is without foundation. I acknowledge that in regard to the preaching of the gospel, the Apostle sets aside the means which human wisdom would devise, such as, enticing words of man's wisdom (*a*), deceit and guile (*b*), flattering words (*c*), and all that is suited to please and gratify the natural inclinations of men (*d*): and he ascribes the effects produced by the gospel solely to the wisdom and the power of God (*e*). It is necessary to pay the strictest attention to this in exhorting one another. But tho' the Apostle discards worldly wisdom, flattery, and deceit; where does he set aside zeal and fervour, in those who are appointed to preach the gospel, or in brethren speaking to one another about the things of God? Does he not on the contrary give a striking example of this in himself, as we have already seen (*f*)? And does he not also recommend it to others (*g*)?

It is quite wrong to imagine, that because the power of God is alone sufficient to edify his people by means of his word and ordinances, therefor we have nothing to do in regard to this matter. If so, what would be the use of being connected together in a church, and attending upon ordinances? We might as well read the word of God at home, as scattered individuals, and expect in this way to be built up on our most holy faith; which is opposite to the whole spirit of the New Testament. Let us follow out this

(*a*) 1 Cor. i 17. & ii. 1. 4.

(*b*) 1 Theff. ii. 3.

(*c*) ——— ver. 5.

(*d*) ——— ver. 4.

(*e*) 1 Cor. i. 17. to the end.

Chap. ii. throughout.

Chap. iii. 6.

2 Cor. iv. 7.

Chap. x. 4. 5.

(*f*) Pag. 27, 28.

(*g*) Acts xx. 17. to 36. 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5



objection, and see where it leads us. There are many duties expressly enjoined upon us in the word of God, which must all be set aside, if we give place to it in its full extent. For instance, we are exhorted to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble minded, and to support the weak(a); but what need is there for such injunctions, if the word is always to produce these effects, without relation to any means used by us? May not the unruly be suffered to go on till the word of God correct them? May not the feeble minded droop and languish, till they find comfort to themselves; and the weak fall before their enemies, till they meet with strength and support by their own attention to the word of God?—When our brother trespasses against us, we are commanded to go and tell him his fault. If he will not hear us, then we must take with us one or two more, to enforce our admonition, and to be witnesses of his behaviour. If he shall neglect to hear them, we must tell it unto the church, that he may likewise be admonished by them, and reclaimed if possible. But if he neglect to hear the church, he must be unto us as an heathen man, and a publican(b). Now, is not this directing us to a variety of means for the purpose of reclaiming an offending brother? And does not the objection make all this unnecessary, while it proceeds upon the supposition that the word of God alone ought to convince our brother of his fault, without any endeavours on our part to bring him to repentance? If it shall be said, that no doubt we must in such cases make use of the word of God, but then little or nothing depends on our *manner* of doing so, provided we bring up scriptures suited to the purpose we have in view; the opposite of this will also appear from the instances that have just been mentioned. Would you comfort the feeble mind-

(a) 1 Theff. v. 14.

(b) Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

ed, and support the weak, in the same manner as you would warn the unruly? Or could you expect to convince a brother of his fault, if you should attack him with such violence or ill humour, as might justly lead him to think that personal resentment, and not love to his soul, was the cause of your dealing with him? If, notwithstanding of this, he were reclaimed, which no doubt might be the case, I should most readily acknowledge that it was owing, not to your endeavours, but to the word of God alone.

The Lord makes use of means suited to bring about the ends he has in view: and one of the means which he hath appointed for our edification and comfort, is the duty we have been considering. When you perform it in a suitable manner, and give evidence that the word of Christ dwells richly in your hearts, as well as your judgments; is not this the work of God? And must not all the good effects produced by your doing so, be ascribed to him *who worketh all in all?* (a) How then can this be said to derogate from the power of the truth, or set aside the effectual working of the Spirit of God? In so far as you come short of what has just been mentioned, you hinder the truth from appearing in it's native beauty and excellency. Can this have any tendency to obviate the objection, and to show that the word of God is quick and powerful? Do we not rather give evidence of it's power by the very thing against which the objection is levelled?

I shall now conclude with observing, that I do not expect to see any of the brethren always come up to the rules that have been laid down, nor am I at all persuaded that I have done so myself, or that I shall always do so in future. Alas! brethren, our hearts are often too little affected by the gospel of Christ to enable us to speak with affection, fervour, and zeal,

and we may often be conscious also of much insincerity, pride, and hypocrisy: but these things are sinful; let us strive against them, and pray to the God of hope, that he would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then shall we exhort one another with sincere and unaffected fervour of spirit, and make it appear to our brethren that we are under the lively impressions of things unseen and eternal. This is all I want, and if my endeavours, under the blessing of God, shall in any measure contribute to this end, I shall rejoice, and give him the glory.

F I N I S.  
4 OC 58